Graffiti: art or vandalism?

Preparation

Match the vocabulary with the correct definition and write a–f next to the numbers 1–6.

1……..	legal	a.	painting or writing on a wall in a public place
2……..	graffiti	b.	the act of breaking or damaging something
3……..	vandalism	c.	rarely; not often
4……..	controversial	d.	nameless; unknown
5……..	anonymous	e.	(about a topic) causing a lot of discussion, debate and argument
6……..	hardly ever	f.	something that you are allowed to do, according to the laws of a country

There is graffiti in almost every city in the world. Read this article to learn more about Britain's most famous graffiti artist.

Where do you expect to see graffiti? Probably not in a museum. Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, in the south-west of England, was the kind of place you went to see classical statues and stuffed animals in cases until the arrival of the 'Banksy versus the Bristol Museum' exhibition in the summer of 2009. The exhibition hosted more than 100 works by Banksy, one of the world's most famous graffiti artists.

Banksy is a man of mystery. He hardly ever gives interviews and likes to be anonymous. Nobody knows much about his life or his background but many people believe that his real name is either Robin Gunningham, Robert Banks or Robin Banks and that he was born in 1973 near Bristol.

Banksy's controversial 'street art' includes spray paintings on live sheep and cows and graffiti on the huge wall erected to divide Israel and Palestine. Brad Pitt spent over $2 million on a Bansky original. Banksy designed an album cover for the Britpop group Blur in 2003 but he has refused at least four requests to do adverts for Nike. A year after the Bristol exhibition, Banksy made a film called Exit Through the Gift Shop. The film tells the story of a French street artist in America. Exit Through the Gift Shop received many positive reviews. Nobody knows if it was about a real artist or an invented character from Banksy's imagination.

Bristol isn't the only place in Britain to welcome graffiti. The DPM Park in Dundee, Scotland has the longest legal graffiti wall (almost 110m long) in the UK. Anyone can paint on the council-owned wall any time they like. Mike Crilley, the graffiti wall project organiser, promotes the positive side of graffiti and runs workshops for local children.

Is everyone doing graffiti? Can we do graffiti where we want these days? Not exactly. It's illegal to paint on somebody else property so make sure you find a legal graffiti wall like the one in Dundee if you want to have a go.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

1. Check your understanding: true or false

Circle *True* or *False* for these sentences.

1.	The 'Banksy versus the Bristol Museum' exhibition was at a museum in Bristol.	*True*	*False*
2.	Banksy likes to give interviews.	*True*	*False*
3.	We don't know Banksy's real name.	*True*	*False*
4.	Banksy has painted graffiti on animals.	*True*	*False*
5.	*Exit Through the Gift Shop* was the name of a popular piece of graffiti.	*True*	*False*
6.	Britain's longest legal graffiti wall is in Scotland.	*True*	*False*

2. Check your understanding: matching

Match the numbers with their meaning in the text.

1……..	more than 100	a.	The year of the 'Banksy versus the Bristol Museum' exhibition.
2……..	2 million	b.	The number of works by Banksy at the Bristol Museum exhibition.
3……..	2009	c.	The year Banksy was (probably) born.
4……..	1973	d.	The amount of money (in dollars) that Brad Pitt paid for a Banksy painting.
5……..	2003	e.	The number of times (at least) Banksy has refused to do adverts for Nike.
6……..	2010	f.	The length in metres of the graffiti wall in Dundee.
7……..	four	g.	The year Banksy made a film called *Exit Through the Gift Shop*.
8……..	110	h.	The year Banksy designed an album cover for Blur.

3. Check your understanding: gap fill

Complete the sentences with a person or place from the box.

Dundee	Banksy	Brad Pitt	Bristol	Mike Crilley	Palestine

1. _____ is the location of the museum and Banksy's hometown.
2. _____ is one of the world's most famous graffiti artists.
3. Banksy painted on the wall which divides Israel and _____
4. _____ bought a painting by Banksy for $2 million.
5. The longest legal graffiti wall in the UK is in _____.
6. _____ organises the legal graffiti wall in Dundee, Scotland.

LIVEWORKSHEETS